

Mormon Pioneer Overland Travel, 1847–1868

Source of Trail Excerpt:

Rogerson, Josiah, "Captain J. G. Willie's Or, the Fourth Handcart Company of 1856 [No. 1]," *Salt Lake Herald*, 15 Dec. 1907.

Read Trail Excerpt:

The names of this company will be given first in place, for if ever in print before, it is over fifty years ago.

The members of this company, mainly, if not all, sailed from the Brammerly-Moor docks at Liverpool, Lancashire, England, in the ship Thornton, May 4, 1856, landing at New York June 14, and arrived at Iowa Hill, near Iowa City, Ia., about the 27th of June, 1856. When the Mormon emigrants that sailed from Liverpool, Lancashire, England, May 25, in the Horizon, and comprising the whole of Martin's handcart company and Hunt's and Hodgett's wagon companies, arrived on Iowa Hill, Ia. July 8 and 9, 1856. Willie's company was then nearly ready to leave that camp with their handcarts and tents all made, wagons loaded with provisions, etc., for the 1,350 mile journey to the Great Salt Lake valley, Utah, and made their start on the 10th or 12th of July, a day or two after Martin's company reached there.

Names of the company from England—Captain J. G. Willie and William Woodward, returning missionaries John Chislett, Ann Osborn, Thomas Moulton and family, Jesse Impey [Empey] and family, William Reed family, Joseph Osborn [Oborn] and family, Sarah Charles [Choules], William Edwick, Alfred Peacock, Jemima Rogers and daughter, Mary P. Griffiths, Suzannah Stone, Min[ni]e A. Cook, Sarah A. Williams, Ester Millard, Elizabeth Tite, Betsey Stanley, Mary A. Stockdale, Julia and Emily Hill, the poetess; Amelia Evans, Cecelia and Sarah Norris, the latter the wife of Elder Jenkins Evans, and residents of Parowan, Iron county, Utah, for the last fifty years; Mary A. and Adelaide Cooper, David Reader and family, Mary A. Birt and family, Joseph Wall and wife, Benjamin Culley, Rebecca Langman, Rebecca Pilgrim, Elizabeth and Jane Culley, Ann Oliver, Ann Cooper, Theophilus Copp [Cox], Thomas Girdlestone and family, James Harren family, William Philpot and family, Rose Key and family, Sam Gadd and family, Mary A. Perkins, John Linford and family, Mary A. Miller, Ann Howard, Mary E. Bretton [Britton], Mary and Elizabeth Fannel [Funnell], Samuel Witts, Ann Bryant, Thomas Hooley, Charles Gumer [Gurney] and family, Anna [Hanna] and Mary [Maria] Kirby, John Nockolds, Abraham Ore and wife, George and Jane [John] Brazier, George Ingra and wife, Kitty Ann Tassell, Ellen Toffield, Lucy Ward, James Oliver, Elizabeth Kirkpatrick, James Gardner and family, William Hailey and wife, Joseph Meadows and wife, Mary and Hannah Dorney, Edward Bowles and wife, Jane Rowley, Thomas Oakley [Oakey] and family, Edward Wheeler and family, Frederick Wall and wife, Jenet [Janetta] and Mary Hodges, Emma Summers, Sarah Steed, Martha Chetwin Mary Ann Newman (widow), her daughters, Eliza, Mary Ann, Caroline and Ellen, and sons, William and John, residents of Parowan, Iron county, Utah, since 1856; Sophia C[r]ook and daughter, Richard and Ann Godfrey, Anna Herbert and son, Thomas and Enoch Bowles, John Roberts, William Jeffry, Richard Hardwick, Richard Turner, George Humphries and family, Eliza Withom [Withorn] and son, Mercy Miller and son, Elizabeth Panting and family, James Read [Reid] and family, Martha Campkin and family, John James, George Curtis, William James and family, Harriet and Ellen C. Showell, Sarah West, Mary Roberts, Ellen Jones, William Smith and wife, John Bailey and family, Ann Rowley and family, residents of Parowan Iron county, Utah, for fifty years; William Page.

From Wales—Catherine M. Griffiths, Edward Griffiths.

From Scotland—Allen M. Findlay and family, residents of Panacea, Nev., for thirty years; Archibald McPheil and family, Margery Smith and family, residents of Beaver City, Utah, for thirty years; Alexander Birt or Burt, Salt Lake, Utah; Thomas Stewart and family, David Anderson, carpenter, resident of Salt Lake

for fifty years; William Ledington and family, James Gibb and wife, Andrew Smith of Salt Lake, Mary A. Calchwell [Caldwell] and family, Barbara Kelly, Ann Tesit, Christina McNeil, John McCollick [McCullough], Jane A. Stuart [Stewart], Isabella Wilkey [Wilkie], John Stuart [Stewart] and family, John Kelly and wife, Elizabeth Forbes.

From Ireland—Joseph McKey (or McKay), Margaret Douglish [Dalglish].

From Sweden—John Ahmansen.

From Bombay—Elizabeth Tealt [Tait].

From the United States—Millen Atwood, Levi Savage, returning missionaries.

From Denmark—Peter Madsen and wife, Peter Jacobson and family, Ann Olsen, Berta Neilsen, Emma Browant [Bravandt], Marcan [Maren] Gregerson, Ella [Helle] Neilsen, Louiza Loutross, Johanna Maria Jensen (afterward the mother of James J. and J. Willard Squires, barbers of this city for many years), and her sister Catherine Jensen; Mari and Anne Anderson, Jens Sanberk [Sandberg], Anders Christensen, Cassius Hanson, Oleo [Ola] Wickland and family, Jens Peterson and family, Jens Neilson and family, Peter Larson and family, Paul Jacobson and wife, Rasmus P. Hanson, Mareann Jergonson [Jorgenson], Christen Jergonson, Carsten Jensen, Ni[e]ls Anderson and family, Andres [Anders] Jensen and family, Rasmus Hanson and wife, Lars Vandelin, Peter Mortenson and family, residents of Parowan, Iron county, Utah, for fifty years; Nils Hanson and wife, Anders Jergonson and family, Sophia Peterson and family, Peter Marsen [Madsen] and family, Ole Madsen, Petrina C. Janes.

Although Captain J. G. Willie's company left Iowa Hill, Ia., some fourteen or sixteen days ahead of ours, Martin's company, with the middle of July weather, and which they made good use of—and all possible had to Florence or Winterquarters [Winter Quarters], Neb., and got away from there with only a few days rest, losing no time from there to Fort Kearney, and realizing the value of the good weather and the date that they should reach and pass Fort Larimie [Laramie]; yet before reaching the latter landmark on those dreary plains, they seemed fated that by a little possible lassitude on the part of their guard at nights over their camp and where it was more necessary than any other part of the journey to meet with their most crippling disaster in the loss by the Cheyenne Indians of half, or more, of their draught oxen.

This to them—at that time and place, was an irreparable loss and fatality, and from which they could not and did not recover to the end of their journey. They had made good headway from the start, with more single and able-bodied members, in comparison to Captain Martin's company, that really contained, and as heretofore recorded, the most aged and infirm, and the cleanings up of that season's emigration.

This loss of half their draught oxen necessitated the unloading onto the carts of the company of half the provisions in the wagons, and taking into considerations the three or four days' spent in hunting for the cattle without moving camp, and after conceding further quest to be hopeless and needless, their travel for the next two and three weeks with but little more than one yoke of oxen to the wagon, was greatly hindered and impeded, placing the company back from where they would have been without this loss, not less than 125 miles.

This company did not lack by any means for members of hardihood, health, strength and endurance, for Captain Willie came to the relief party below the mouth of Willow creek, after dark at night, on Monday, October 20, 1856, and with what assistance they received from that on they were enabled to reach Salt Lake City on Sunday, November 9, the morning Martin's company left the "Ravine." Three miles west of Devil's Gate and 350 miles from Salt Lake City.

This loss on their part figures out almost proportionately with them as the unnecessary delay on Iowa Hill, Ia., of sixteen days waiting for the handcarts to be made after we got there, did to Martin's company, for now it is proof beyond question that sixteen days of fairly good weather and dry ground would have landed the latter company from the Platte bridge in the vicinity of Big Sandy or Green river, but the knowledge of the future is often withheld from the most gifted and wise and for a purpose best known to Himself.

One paragraph more from the late President Franklin D. Richards' journal on his return from Florence, Neb. to Salt Lake that season, and then follows Captain J. G. Willie's report which is the best authority as to the

travels, hardships, sufferings and losses by death of his company.

Friday, Sept. 12, 1856—We overtook and camped with Brother Willie's company at North Bluff creek, consisting of 404 persons, six wagons, 87 handcars, six yoke of oxen, thirty-two cows and five mules. They were considerably weakened by the loss of their oxen which they had failed to recover, but were in good spirits and averaging fourteen to sixteen miles a day. Here we forded the Platte river to the south side and were followed by the handcars.

Never was a more soul-stirring sight than the party and the passage of this company over that river. Several of the carts were drawn entirely by women, yet their hearts were glad and full of hope.

It will be remembered that President Franklin D. Richards and his company of returning missionaries left Florence, Neb., on September 3, passing Martin's company on Sunday, September 7, and in five days more overtook Willie's company as above recorded. This would then place the latter company from 125-150 miles west of Martin's, and in the vicinity of Fort Kearney, where their cattle were stolen.

Captain James G. Willie's digest of his journal of the journey of his company from Liverpool, England, to Lake City, Utah.

Synopsis of the fourth handcart company's trip from Liverpool, England, to Great Salt Lake City, in the spring, summer and autumn of 1856. (Written by Elder James G. Willie, Captain.)

On Thursday, May 1, the ship Thornton, Captain Collins, received the Saints (761 in number) on board the ship in the Brammerley-Moore docks, Liverpool, and on the following Saturday President F. D. Richards, accompanied by the government inspector and doctor, came on board, and the Saints answered to the usual inspection and were all pronounced by those officers to be in good health. President Richards appointed myself (James G. Willie) captain of the company, and Elder Millen Atwood, Moses Clough and Johan A. Ahmanson, my counselors, and afterward in a few appropriate remarks exhorted the people to strict obedience on the passage, as otherwise they could not expect, and would not have a prosperous journey. President Richards then blessed them in the name of the Lord and by authority of the holy priesthood. Captain Willie then made the usual appointments for the promotion of cleanliness and good order, and on Sunday, May 4, at 3 a.m. the company was tugged out of the river by the Pilot. Sea-sickness soon commenced, but through the blessings of the Lord it was not frequent during the voyage, and which terminated at New York on the 14th of June. The spirit of the Lord prevailed. The ship's captain yielded to the influence which surrounded him and was kind and affable to all, often voluntarily giving from his own table for the comfort of the sick and infirm, and otherwise ministering to their wants with his own hands. He seemed to be a good man, and I felt all the time and still feel to say "God bless Captain Collins." By his sanction meetings (at which he was generally present for preaching and bearing testimony) were held on the quarterdeck, and every liberty which could in reason be expected was granted by him. He often in polite terms, complimented the Saints upon their cleanliness and upon their ready compliance with his requests from time to time, and said he never wished for a better or more orderly lot of passengers.

They certainly deserved the captain's encomium, for with scarcely an exception, they did their utmost to carry out to the very letter the instructions given. Previous to landing at New York a testimonial, expressive of the Saints' appreciation of the captain's and the doctor's kindness, was presented to them by myself; and one signed by the captain, first mate and doctor, on behalf of themselves and the ship's company, was presented to me on behalf of the Saints. On our arrival at Castle Gardens, New York, we received a hearty welcome from President John Taylor and Elder Felt. Several gentlemen of the press also paid us a visit and were very courteous toward us, appearing desirous to obtain information concerning the company from its officers, and subsequently several paragraphs appeared in different New York newspapers in praise of the general appearance and demeanor of the entire company.

On Tuesday, June 17, they started under the presidency of Elder Levi Savage for Dunkirk, a distance of 46 miles, where they arrived on the 19th, leaving Brother Atwood and myself behind to transact sundry items of business. We, however, arrived at Dunkirk by express train on the same day, and immediately embarked with the Saints on the Jersey City for Toledo, 280 miles further, where we arrived on Saturday, the 21st, in good health and spirits. We at once started per rail for Chicago, which we reached on the following day. I

should mention that the railway authorities at Toledo manifested a very unkind spirit toward us, putting us every inconvenience in their power. The conductor compelled us to land in the streets of Chicago, but the superintendent there gave us the use of an empty warehouse for the night.

The day [-] next day (the 23d) most of the English Saints left per rail at 3 p.m. and the rest at 11 p.m. for Rock Island. On the first train arriving at Pond Creek, the next day, it was ascertained that the railway bridge there had fallen down while a previous train was passing over it. Several brethren, including Brothers—among them Erastus Snow, were in the train, and although many of the passengers were seriously injured, they escaped unhurt. We slept in the cars, and on the 25th the remainder of our company came up. We had much difficulty in obtaining provisions.